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CPYRGHT

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CIA Critics in Capital Torpedo Polaris Admiral



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RETIRED Vice Adm. William F. Raborn Jr. has headed CIA only since last spring. His appointment was greeted with something less than wild enthusiasm by the dug-in spook bureaucrats in the elephantine espionage agency, and it was remarked by others as an additional earnest of President Johnson's vast misunderstanding of every other nation on earth.

The CIA is regarded with dread, loathing and/or contempt by every sophisticated foreigner in the world, and the appointment of a ham-fisted, salty-talking retired admiral as its strawboss was not calculated to improve its image.

Moreover, outside the White House there were few who believed Raborn would succeed in running the huge spy works. "But," as one weary Johnson-watcher put it, "Raborn was an admiral, and he was from Texas. Lyndon has always been tremendously impressed by the brass, and brass from Texas is that much more impressive to him."

So Raborn took over CIA, and almost at once the expression cowboys use when yearlings are converted into steers began to be heard. The knife work began to appear in various learned journals, and to the practiced eye it all had the look of authenticity.

It became clear that the well-bred chaps in CIA were planting nasty stories about their boss, and the stories were the nastier because they were very likely true. The burden of the slurs was that Raborn had no more intellect than the average retired admiral, which is, of course, a terrible indictment.

He didn't know the minutiae of international politics that is so beloved in the CIA, he derailed policy meetings by maundering about how he delivered the Polaris missile three years ahead of schedule, and heavens,

he didn't even know what choice words such as "oligarchy" meant.

None of this, to be sure, would necessarily be disqualifying in Washington. Most bureaucrats are comparative ignoramuses when they emerge from their narrow spheres, and no outsider was calculated to win the affection of the parochial conspirators in CIA. But all of the stories about Raborn pointed out that he also seemed to have fallen into disfavor at the White House. The current issue of Newsweek, which repeats all of the planted calumnies about Raborn, reiterates the deadly charge that LBJ has scarcely seen his new CIA director since he had his gall bladder quarried. That is much worse than simply asserting that a man is incompetent and ornery, for it suggests that being a retired admiral and a Texan might not be quite enough.

In any event, the grisly word is abroad in the nation's capital that crude cowhand surgery is to be performed on Raborn. If it is true it is important, for it may indicate that President Johnson has begun to learn the expensive lesson that all Presidents learn—the utility and breadth of the military mind is sharply limited and isn't to be trusted outside the narrow range of its training.

If the stories about Raborn are not true, or if they do not result in his early retirement from CIA, they remain a classical example of how career bureaucrats use their snickersneezes to dispose of politically appointed chiefs in whom they repose neither respect nor affection.

In the larger view, the CIA careerists are terrified that never-quieted dead attempts to bring their gaudy irresponsibility under the check of a congressional committee may someday succeed, and they regard Raborn as a poor advocate for their continued independence.